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Agriculture • Economics

Reports

From USDA's Economic Research Service

Fall 1985

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CS

Introduction 2

Farmland 3

Irrigation and Energy 4

Pests and Pest Control 5

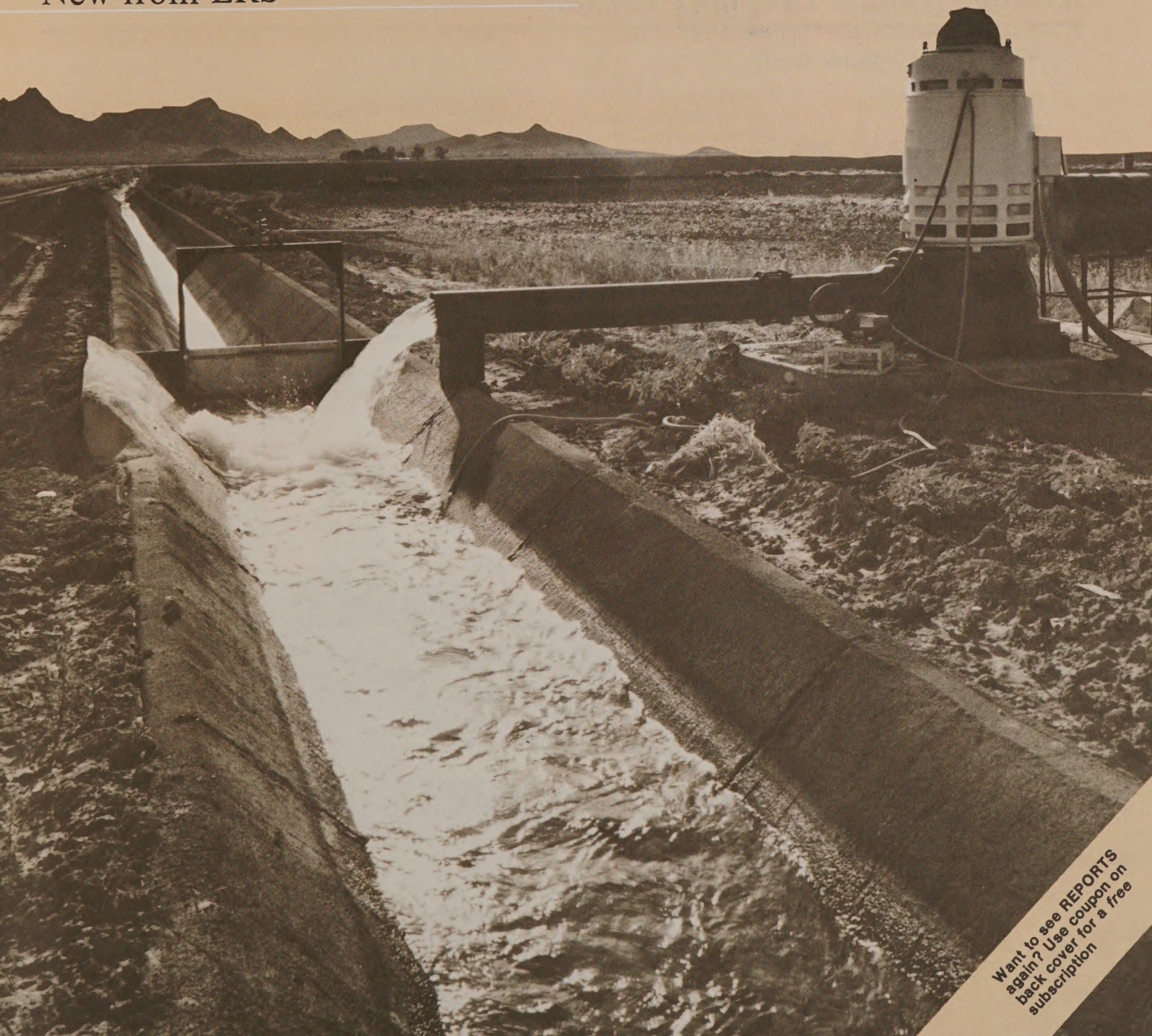
Soil Conservation 6

New from ERS 7

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Introduction

A broad base of agricultural land, fertile soils, and available supplies of water form the foundation for productive agriculture in the United States. Agricultural chemicals and a range of farm machinery further improve the productive potential of our natural resource base.

But problems have arisen. Farmland values are declining, input costs are rising, some sources of

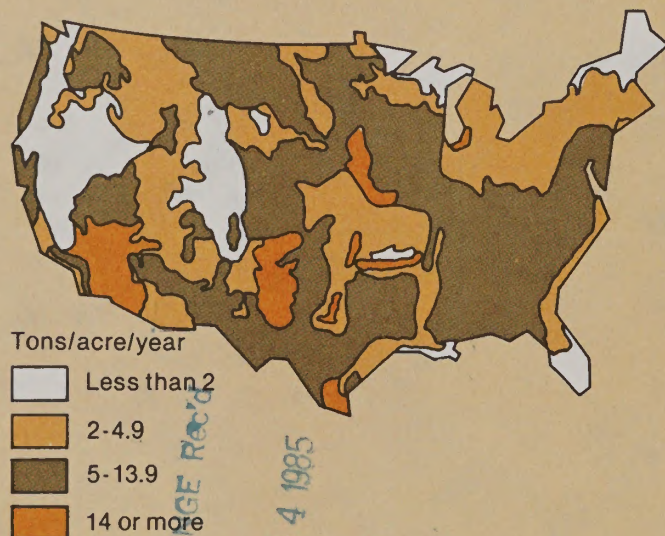
irrigation water are being depleted, and soil erosion remains a serious concern.

This special edition of **Reports** is devoted to recent ERS publications on natural resources and inputs in agriculture.

Reports is a free quarterly publication describing reports issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. To subscribe to **Reports**, please use the coupon on the back of this issue.

Average Annual Cropland Erosion

Average Annual Cropland Erosion



1983 data. Includes sheet, rill, and wind erosion on cropland.

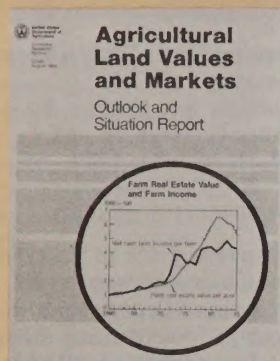
Average annual sheet, rill, and wind erosion on U.S. cropland was recently estimated at 7.3 tons per acre. Forty-four percent of the cropland was eroding above rates that will sustain high levels of production in the future.

—Chart 42, 1984 Handbook of Agricultural Charts. AH-637. 92 pp. \$3.75. Order SN: 001-019-003685-5 from GPO through the coupon on page 9.



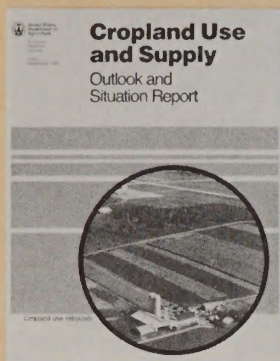
Two valuable annual reports

The United States faces a major adjustment in farmland values in response to changing domestic and international demands for U.S. agricultural products, domestic commodity programs, and general economic trends. Average farmland values dropped 12 percent from April 1984 to April 1985, and further declines are expected. The following reports describe trends in values and use of U.S. cropland.



Agricultural Land Values and Markets. CD-90. August 1985. 28 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00406-1 from GPO.

Farmland values fell 12 percent from April 1984 to April 1985 to their lowest level since 1979.



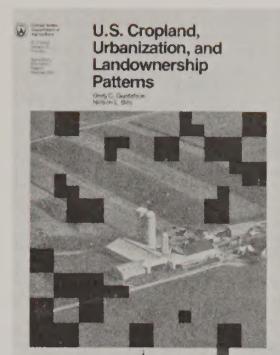
Cropland Use and Supply. September 1985. Order SN: 001-019-00419-3 from GPO. Call GPO for price and ordering information.

Focuses on the availability of cropland and changes in cropland use.



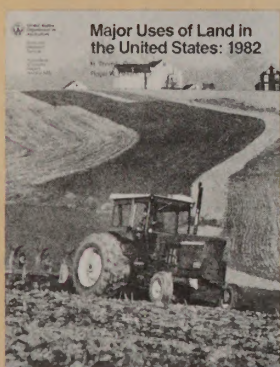
Improving U.S. Farmland, by Douglas Lewis and Thomas A. McDonald. AIB-482. November 1984. 12 pp. \$1.00. Order SN: 001-019-00362-6 from GPO.

A clear, concise account of recent farmland improvements. Farmers invested more than \$6.5 billion in improving their land in a recent 3-year period. Those investments, while often made on existing cropland, expanded total U.S. cropland by 9.1 million acres. Costs and methods of clearing, draining, conserving, and irrigating the land are discussed.



U.S. Cropland, Urbanization, and Landownership Patterns, by Greg C. Gustafson and Nelson L. Bills. AER-520. November 1984. 24 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00366-9 from GPO.

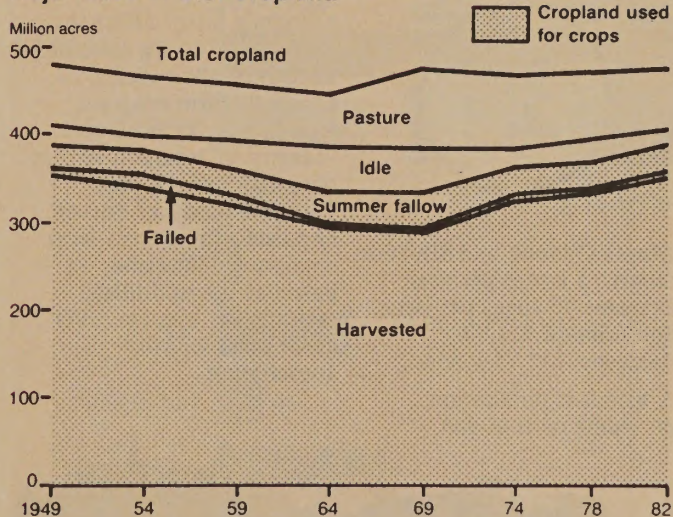
Urbanization presents no threat to most U.S. farmland. More than 80 percent of U.S. cropland (and land that could be converted to cropland) lies in rural areas subject to little or no urban encroachment.



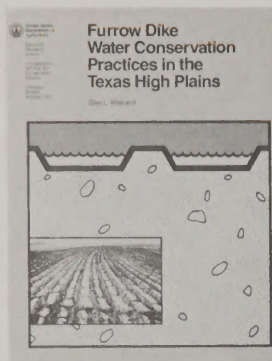
Major Uses of Land in the United States: 1982, by H. Thomas Frey and Roger W. Hexem. AER-535. June 1985. 36 pp. \$1.25. Order SN: 001-019-00398-7 from GPO.

Discusses the major uses of the Nation's 2,265 million acres of land in 1982: cropland, 469 million acres; grassland pasture and range, 597 million acres; forest land (exclusive of areas in special-purpose uses), 655 million acres; special uses, 270 million acres; and miscellaneous other land, 274 million acres. Changes in cropland and pasture acreages were barely perceptible during 1978-82; forest land (except special use areas) and miscellaneous other land decreased sharply as large acreages in these categories were reclassified as parks, wilderness, and related uses.

Major Uses of U.S. Cropland



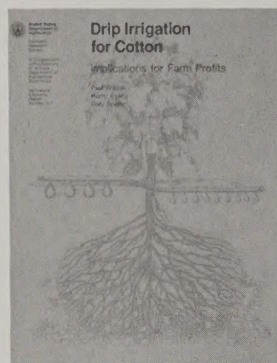
Irrigation and Energy



Furrow Dike Water Conservation Practices in the Texas High Plains, by Glen L. Wistrand. TB-1691. September 1984. 28 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00345-6 from GPO.

Discusses the costs and effects of diking on water and soil conservation and crop yields. Furrow diking can prevent irrigation and rainfall runoff, conserve energy, prevent soil loss, and allow producers to reclaim

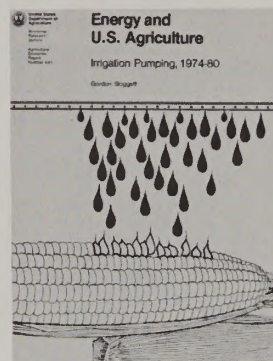
land. Initial investment to use the technique may be recovered within the first season.



Drip Irrigation for Cotton: Implications for Farm Profits, by Paul Wilson, Harry Ayer, and Gary Snider. AER-517. July 1984. 40 pp. \$2.00. Order SN: 001-019-00346-4 from GPO.

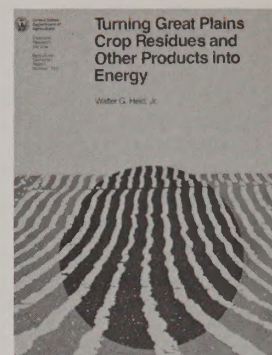
In experiments, water-saving drip irrigation has cut water use by up to 50 percent and

raised cotton yields by a half bale or more per acre in the arid Southwest. New detailed data show that the costs of operating a drip system on a cotton farm in central Arizona are comparable with the costs of operating a conventional furrow irrigation system.



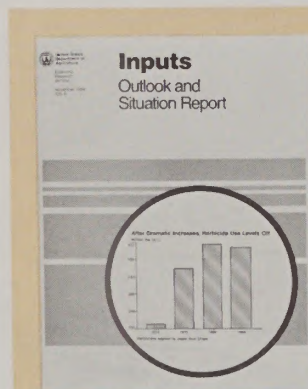
Energy and U.S. Agriculture: Irrigation Pumping, 1974-80, by Gordon Sloggett. AER-495. December 1982. 44 pp. \$4.50. Order SN: 001-019-00329-4 from GPO.

Finds that favorable economic conditions could bring 3-4 million additional acres under irrigation in the Great Plains by the year 2020 along with significant increases in the Eastern United States. Land irrigated with onfarm pumped water increased by 7.5 million acres to 42 million acres from 1974 to 1980, but sharply higher energy prices pushed pumping costs from \$570 million to \$1.9 billion. NOTE: An update of this report, titled "*Energy and U.S. Agriculture: Irrigation Pumping, 1974-83*," by the same author, is due out in November of this year. Call GPO at (202) 783-3238 in November for price and ordering information.



Turning Great Plains Crop Residues and Other Products into Energy, by Walter G. Heid, Jr. AER-523. November 1984. 48 pp. \$2.25. Order SN: 001-019-00354-5 from GPO.

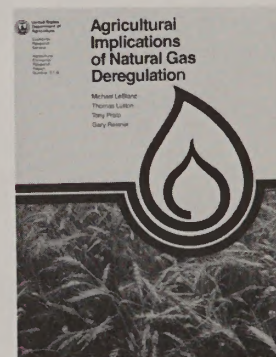
A practical guide to the types of residues and wastes and the costs and constraints involved in converting them into fuel energy. Addresses several issues that must be considered in choosing the type of conversion plant, its size, and location.



Inputs Outlook and Situation Report. 2 issues per year; averages 40 pages per issue. Subscription \$11.00 domestic; \$13.75 foreign.

A biannual publication providing current and

projected information on the supply, demand, price, and trade for five major inputs: pesticides, fertilizer, farm machinery, energy, and seeds. Describes how economic forces affect the outcome of or are affected by various public policies, especially farm program legislation. Includes such industry information as that obtained through the Pesticide Producer Survey, and lists annual farm-level data on fertilizer and pesticide use and tillage operations. Use the GPO order form for your subscription.

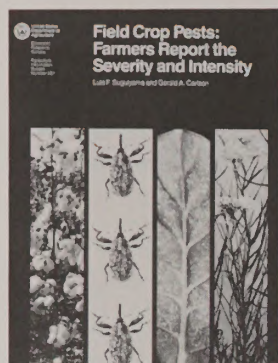


Agricultural Implications of Natural Gas Deregulation, by Michael LeBlanc, Thomas Lutton, Tony Prato, and Gary Reisner. AER-512. July 1984. 24 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00334-1 from GPO.

Implications of three policy options for Federal deregulation of natural gas prices for 1983-90: a phased-in price decontrol, a 2-year freeze on gas prices, and accelerated decontrol of wellhead gas prices.

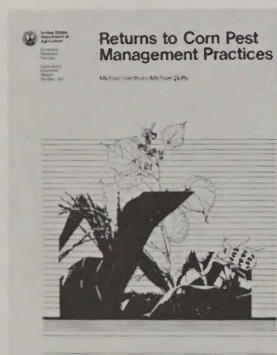


Pests and Pest Control



Field Crop Pests: Farmers Report the Severity and Intensity, by Luis F. Suguiyama and Gerald A. Carlson. AIB-487. February 1985. 60 pp. \$2.25. Order SN: 001-019-00377-4 from GPO.

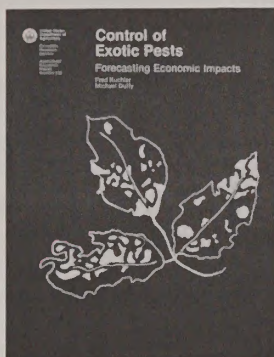
Estimates the importance of individual pests on selected field crops on a regional and national basis. Farmers reported that the most severe and intense pests were weeds in corn and soybeans, weeds and insects in cotton, and diseases and insects in tobacco.



Returns to Corn Pest Management Practices, by Michael Hanthorn/Michael Duffy. AER-501. June 1983. 20 pp. \$2.50. Order SN: 001-000-04339-1 from GPO.

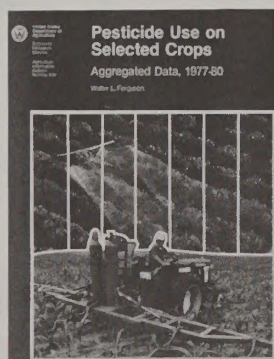
A study of the productivity of pesticides applied to nonirrigated corn and nonchemical pest management practices used by corn farmers. The return to \$1 spent on herbicides and insecticides was \$1.05 and \$1.03, respectively. Corn

farmers generally applied herbicides and insecticides at optimal levels in 1980. Yields did not vary among tillage systems, but were significantly lower for farmers who mechanically cultivated their fields more than once after planting.



Control of Exotic Pests: Forecasting Economic Impacts, by Fred Kuchler and Michael Duffy. AER-518. August 1984. 24 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00350-2 from GPO.

Crop losses from pests do not always reduce grower profits. This study examines the soybean losses caused by soybean rust and reports that growers' income levels generally are elevated because commodity price increases often outweigh production losses.



Pesticide Use on Selected Crops: Aggregated Data, 1977-80, by Walter L. Ferguson. AIB-494. June 1985. 32 pp. \$1.25. Order SN: 001-019-00397-9 from GPO.

A look at pesticide use during the late 1970's. U.S. farmers applied an average 556 million pounds of pesticides in 354 million acre-treatments on 175 million acres of field, fruit, and vegetable crops annually during 1977-80. These figures are based on reported pesticide use in surveys completed in various years and do not include all the above crops in any year surveyed.

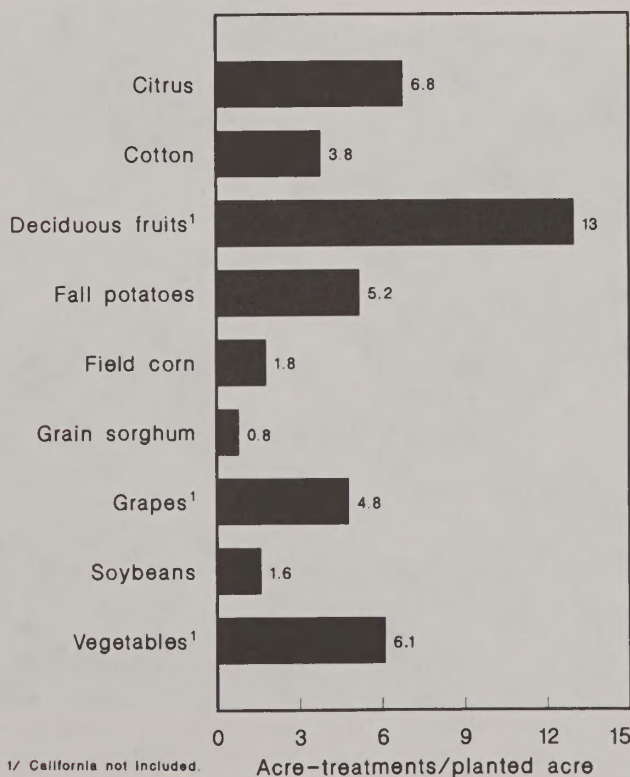


The Africanized Honey Bee in the United States: What Will Happen to the U.S. Beekeeping Industry? by Robert McDowell. AER-519. November 1984. 44 pp. \$2.25. Order SN: 001-019-00356-1 from GPO.

Winner of Society for Technical Communication award, 1984-85.

Recent killer bee discoveries in California and New York renew interest in this report of the economic impact of Africanized honey bees in the United States. The U.S. beekeeping industry could experience annual losses of \$26 to \$58 million if this bee colonizes the South and Southwest and causes the kinds of problems it has caused elsewhere. If this bee colonizes the area that has at least 240 frost-free days a year, losses could range from \$49 to \$58 million annually.

Pesticide use: Acre-treatments per planted acre, by crop



—From the "Inputs" Outlook and Situation report spring 1985. See page 4 for details.

Soil Conservation

Assessing Erosion on U.S. Cropland: Land Management and Physical Features, by Nelson L. Bills and Ralph E. Heimlich. AER-513. July 1984. 24 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00341-3 from GPO.

Erosion from rainfall causes nearly 100 million acres of U.S. cropland to erode by more than 5 tons per acre per year. One-third of this land is so highly erosive that annual soil loss can be reduced to tolerable levels only under the most restrictive land management practices. More than one-third of U.S. cropland is inherently nonerosive under all management regimes, about half requires conservation management to keep soil loss within tolerable limits, and the remaining 8 percent is so erosive that acceptable soil loss rates cannot be achieved under intensive cultivation.

Cropland Rental and Soil Conservation in the United States, by Nelson L. Bills. AER-529. March 1985. 20 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00387-1 from GPO.

Data from USDA's Resource Economics Survey challenge the common but not well-substantiated view that farmers are less concerned with erosion on land they rent than on land they own. At the national level,

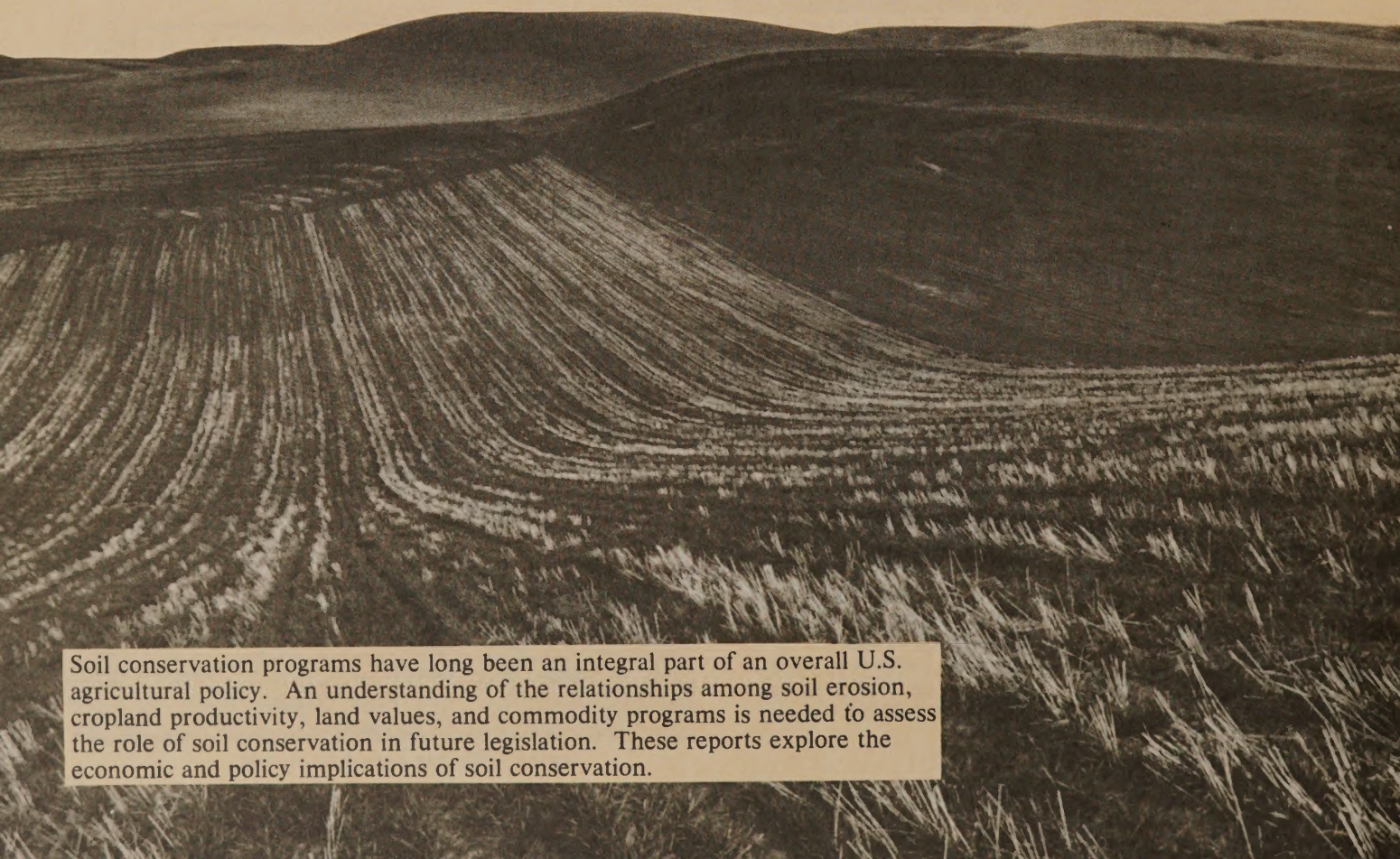
farmers' conservation efforts on rented cropland compare favorably with those on owner-operated cropland.

Do USDA Farm Program Participants Contribute to Soil Erosion? by Katherine H. Reichelderfer. AER-532. April 1985. 84 pp. \$3.00. Order SN: 001-019-00383-9 from GPO.

Finds that only about one-third of U.S. cropland with excessive soil erosion rates is operated by farmers who might be influenced to reduce erosion if changes were made in USDA's commodity and soil conservation programs. Present commodity programs may conflict with conservation programs by encouraging cultivation of erosive crops. Efforts to increase the consistency of USDA commodity and conservation programs would contribute little to overcoming the Nation's total erosion problem.

Returns to Corn and Soybean Tillage Practices, by Michael Duffy/Michael Hanthorn. AER-508. December 1983. 20 pp. Order SN: 001-000-04398-6 from GPO. \$1.25.

Average per-acre returns differ little for most U.S. corn and soybean farmers using various tillage strategies. Midwest conventional-till soybean farmers, however, accrue a much



Soil conservation programs have long been an integral part of an overall U.S. agricultural policy. An understanding of the relationships among soil erosion, cropland productivity, land values, and commodity programs is needed to assess the role of soil conservation in future legislation. These reports explore the economic and policy implications of soil conservation.

higher average return than do Midwest no-till farmers. Conservation-till soybean farmers in the three major producing regions incur significantly lower input costs than do conventional-till soybean farmers, but also harvest lower yields, except in the Southeast.

Free Background Papers

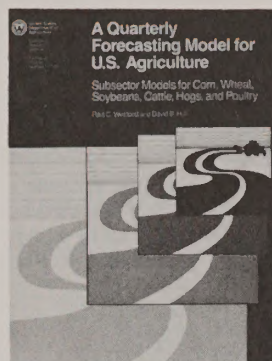
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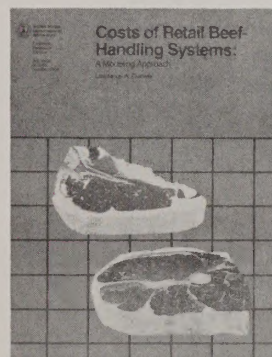
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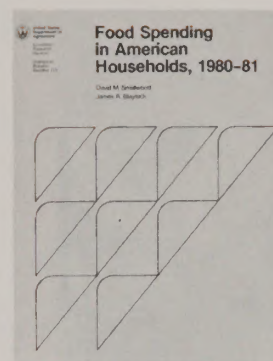
A Quarterly Forecasting Model for U.S. Agriculture: Subsector Models for Corn, Wheat, Soybeans, Cattle, Hogs, and Poultry, by Paul C. Wescott and David B. Hull. TB-1700. May 1985. 52 pp. \$2.00. Order SN: 001-019-00390-1 from GPO.

Presents a newly developed econometric model for the U.S. agriculture sector.



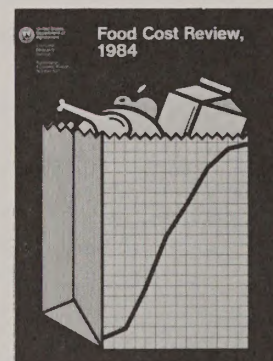
Costs of Retail Beef-Handling Systems: A Modeling Approach, by Lawrence A. Duewer. TB-1704. June 1985. 64 pp. \$2.25. Order SN: 001-019-00404-5 from GPO.

Retail grocery chains should have their central warehouses cut and package beef carcasses into retail cuts for delivery to local stores to keep beef-handling costs as low as possible, according to this computer simulation of 10 systems. When seeking the highest return, however, two different systems emerged as best: boxed beef, the system now used by most grocers, and tray-ready beef.



Food Spending in American Households, 1980-81, by David M. Smallwood and James R. Blaylock. SB-731. July 1985. 144 pp. \$5.00. Order SN: 001-019-00410-0 from GPO.

This bulletin presents information on weekly food expenditures per person, based on the 1980-81 Continuing Consumer Expenditures Survey prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



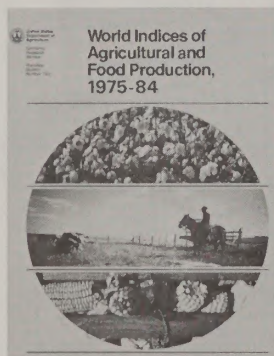
Food Cost Review, 1984. AER-537. July 1985. 56 pp. \$2.00. Order SN: 001-019-00411-8 from GPO.

This report presents USDA's findings on how much food prices rose in 1984, how much of the retail food price the farm value represents, how recent developments affected food industry costs, and how much Americans spent for farm-produced foods.



Developmental Consequences of Unrestricted Trade, by Thomas Vollrath. FAER-213. May 1985. 20 pp. \$1.00. Order SN: 001-019-00391-0 from GPO.

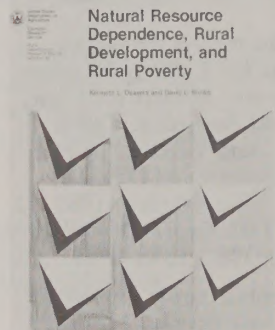
An analysis of the economic forces which determine how trade affects development and growth. International trade, unencumbered by protectionism, stimulates economic growth in both developed and developing countries. Undistorted trade is a catalyst to economic growth because it unleashes market forces which promote development.



World Indices of Agricultural and Food Production, 1975-84 SB-730. June 1985. 180 pp. \$6.50. Order SN: 001-019-00408-8 from GPO.

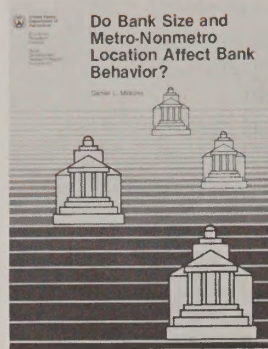
Presents indices of total and per capita agricultural and food production for 1955-84 and production data for 1975-84 for 11 countries, 12 regions, and the world. Production and food indices

are calculated using Laspeyres' base-weighted aggregate formula. Selected production data are given in 1,000 metric tons by country. World agricultural production grew at a compound annual rate of 2.4 percent since 1955, while the rate on a per capita basis was only 0.5 percent.



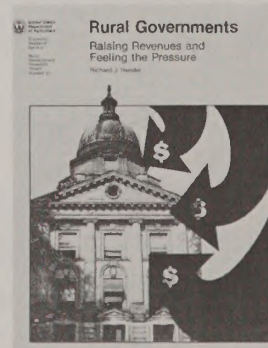
Natural Resource Dependence, Rural Development, and Rural Poverty, by Kenneth L. Deavers and David L. Brown. RDRR-48. July 1985. 24 pp. \$1.00. Order SN: 001-019-00395-2 from GPO.

Examines the influence of natural resource dependence on rural income levels and recent population growth. Rural poverty and population decline are now only weakly connected with a rural county's economic dependence on agriculture, mining, or Federal landownership. Thus, natural resource-dependent counties are not the principal target of programs designed to relieve population decline and low-income problems in rural America.



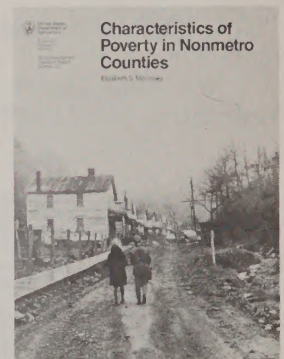
Do Bank Size and Metro-Nonmetro Location Affect Bank Behavior? by Daniel L. Milkove. RDRR-47. April 1985. 20 pp. \$1.00. Order SN: 001-019-00392-8 from GPO.

Finds that a bank's lending policies and aggressiveness in attracting large deposits depend more on size of the bank's assets than on its location. Many rural banks do take fewer risks than urban banks, but that's because of the small sizes (values of assets) of many rural banks, not their location. The kinds of deposits (6-month money market certificates and large time deposits) and investments (government securities and Federal funds) a bank uses, the rate of loan losses, and its profitability indicate a bank's aggressiveness and lending policies.



Rural Governments: Raising Revenues and Feeling the Pressure, by Richard J. Reeder. RDRR-51. July 1985. 40 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00399-5 from GPO.

Assesses fiscal pressures on local governments by looking at locally raised taxes and user fees as a percentage of local income. Some local governments in nonmetro areas—especially those in the rural West and in highly rural areas—experienced severe fiscal stress during the 1970's associated with high and rising local taxes. These local governments may be forced to cut back their rural development activities in the 1980's.



Characteristics of Poverty in Nonmetro Counties, by Elizabeth S. Morrissey. RDRR-52. July 1985. 16 pp. \$1.00. Order SN: 001-019-00400-2 from GPO.

Identifies the unique characteristics of nonmetro counties with large proportions of persons living in poverty. Knowing these characteristics can help public officials develop successful antipoverty programs. In counties with high poverty rates, families headed by women are almost three times as likely to be living at or below the poverty level as they are in counties with low poverty rates.

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Qty.	Title	Stock number	Price
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	Energy and U.S. Agriculture: Irrigation Pumping, 1974-80	001-019-00329-4	\$4.50
	Turning Great Plains Crop Residues and Other Products into Energy	001-019-00354-5	\$2.25
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	The Africanized Honey Bee in the United States: What Will Happen to the U.S. Beekeeping Industry?	001-019-00356-1	\$2.25

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	Cropland Use and Supply	001-019-00419-3	Call GPO, 783-3238

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	Cropland Rental and Soil Conservation in the United States	001-019-00387-1	\$1.50
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	Returns to Corn and Soybean Tillage Practices	001-000-04398-6	\$1.25

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	Food Spending in American Households, 1980-81	001-019-00410-0	\$5.00
	Food Cost Review, 1984	001-019-00411-8	\$2.00
	Developmental Consequences of Unrestricted Trade	001-019-00391-0	\$1.00
	World Indices of Agricultural and Food Production, 1975-84	001-019-00408-8	\$6.50
	Natural Resource Dependence, Rural Development, and Rural Poverty	001-019-00395-2	\$1.00
	Do Bank Size and Metro-Nonmetro Location Affect Bank Behavior?	001-019-00392-8	\$1.00
	Rural Governments: Raising Revenues and Feeling the Pressure	001-019-00399-5	\$1.50
	Characteristics of Poverty in Nonmetro Counties	001-019-00400-2	\$1.00
	1984 Handbook of Agricultural Charts	001-019-00368-5	\$3.75

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	Farmers' Guide to Trading Agricultural Commodity Options	001-019-00331-6	\$1.50

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The Distribution of Daily Changes in Commodity Futures Prices, by J. Douglas Gordon. TB-1702. July 1985. 40 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00393-6 from GPO.

Agricultural futures prices over the entire life of a commodity futures contract tend to vary more during growing seasons than after harvest. Thus, many economic models used in analyzing and forecasting price changes of commodity futures contracts are inaccurate. The variability of futures prices over shortrun, 2-month segments within a single season is more constant and thus fits within many standard economic models used for analyzing and forecasting.

Farmers' Use of Cash Forward Contracts, Futures Contracts, and Commodity Options, by Allen B. Paul, Richard G. Heifner, and J. Douglas Gordon. AER-533. May 1985. 40 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00386-3 from GPO.

Describes different types of forward contracts, the factors a farmer should consider in forward selling, and the major pitfalls involved. Unstable farm prices can spur farmers' interest in the various forms of forward selling. Forward selling, which involves selling crops or livestock in advance of delivery, enables farmers to reduce the risk that the price they get for their output might not cover the costs of their inputs and to ensure outlets for highly specialized or perishable products.

Farmers' Guide to Trading Agricultural Commodity Options, by David E. Kenyon. AIB-463. April 1984. 24 pp. \$1.50. Order SN: 001-019-00331-6 from GPO.

This manual explains the concept of options, the terminology of option contracts, and the factors influencing option prices. Includes examples to show the comparative advantages, disadvantages, and profitability of options versus futures and how farmers' expectations of crop yields will affect their hedging strategies.

Some Facts About Sodbusting:

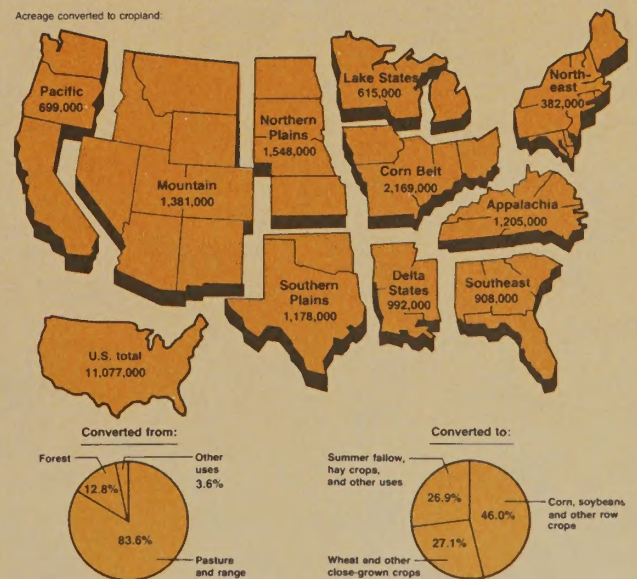
—Sodbusting occurs in every region, not just the Great Plains. During 1979-81, 20 percent of the converted land was in the Corn Belt; the northern Great Plains was second with 14 percent.

—Converting land back to pasture takes about 1 to 2 years in the Corn Belt, compared with perhaps 30-50 years in the Great Plains.

—Most new cropland is not highly erodible. Only about one-fifth of the acreage converted during 1979-81 was highly erodible.

—Details from *Sodbusting: Land Use Change and Farm Programs*. For information on how to obtain your free copy of this report, see page 7.

More Than 11 Million Acres Were Converted to Cropland Between 1979 and 1981, With the Largest Conversions in the Corn Belt and Northern Plains



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